

# **NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION**

## **Rethinking Citizenship Education in European Migration Societies Political Strategies - Social Changes - Educational Concepts**

### **Conference Paper**

**Contribution to Workshop 3, Session 2:  
Economic Dimensions of Migration –  
Challenges of Citizenship Education**

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Migration flows to and from Serbia, the province of Kosovo, and Montenegro have been prompted and moulded by the complex recent historical events of the Western Balkans and its geographic proximity to the economically prosperous European Union. Refugees from Bosnia and Croatia, internally displaced persons from Kosovo, forced returnees from Western Europe whose temporary protection has ended, asylum seekers and victims of trafficking are the primary categories of forced migrants in the area of study. Small numbers of refugees and displaced persons are also being repatriated. Economic pressures prompt primarily emigration from the region, however, small populations of economic immigrants to Serbia cannot be discounted. This article will attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of migration flows to and from Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro with an emphasis on articulating the degree to which these different migrant groups enjoy their social and economic rights.

Historically, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, migrants, including those from the south Slavic countries, were generally treated as an asset to both the country of origin and the country of immigration. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, however, migrants from less developed countries have been perceived in developed countries as a problem to be regulated and their status started to be intensively controlled. Thus, the liberalisation of capital, goods and services spread and deepened globally while the mobility of the accompanying labour force has been restricted. Contemporary international political and economic institutions and regimes have provided insufficient space for democratic negotiations on labour mobility and remittances.

Serbia, including its southern provinces Kosovo and Metohija, and Montenegro have traditionally been sources of emigration. By the beginning of the 1990s, migration from the region had a dominant economic character. However, the intensity of emigration in general depends on historical, economic, demographic, political, social, ethnic and psychological factors. The events of the 1990s have accelerated emigration from this region. The civil wars in the former Yugoslav republics of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, and conflict in Kosovo and Metohija have had the greatest impact. The subsequent international isolation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, with sanctions by the UN

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Security Council, a three-month NATO bombing in 1999, and the catastrophic decline in living standards, lead to general poverty. In 1991, the GDP of Serbia dropped by 11.6%, in 1992 by 27.9% and in 1993 by 30.8%. When this is added to a drastic drop again in 1999 of 18%, it is understandable that Serbia today has a GDP of only 60% of that in 1989. However, the fall in the gross domestic product had very little relation to the transition process.

These events, as well as the effects of the transition away from socialism, in Serbia and Montenegro during the nineties, have also contributed to a constant rise in unemployment. The registered unemployment rate in Serbia in 2006 exceeded 32%, with a real unemployment rate of 21,8% (2005), compared to 13.3% in 2000.<sup>1</sup> Among youth, rates are more worrying; 47.7% (2005) of persons under 25 years of age are unemployed. According to UNMIK data, the unemployment rate in Kosovo and Metohija reached 41.4% in 2005, and the unemployment rate among youth (up to 25 years of age) was 70.5%, compared with 57.1% and 80.0% in 2001 respectively<sup>2</sup>. This data shows a slight improvement, however, it does not take into account variations between ethnic groups. Serbs in Kosovo and Metohiji live in extremely difficult conditions. The real unemployment rate in Montenegro has grown from 19.3% in 2000 to 30.3% in 2005.<sup>3</sup>

With regard to employment in Serbia, the implementation of the National Employment Strategy for the period 2005 – 2010 has been initiated. The main goal of this Strategy is the reduction of the extremely high unemployment rate. Amendments to the Profit Tax Law have been introduced to stimulate job creation for youth, older unemployed persons and persons with disabilities. In the field of social inclusion, the Law on the Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities was adopted in the second quarter of 2006, along with comprehensive provisions to prevent discrimination in employment, education and health.

Consolidation of ethnic groups has been the overarching trend in forced migration flows within and between Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro. Minority returns are exceptions to this trend. In addition, among forced migrants secondary displacement is frequently undertaken voluntarily, particularly from rural to urban settings, for economic reasons. Alternately, lack of employment opportunities in Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro is frequently a cause for illegal migration to Western Europe; returnees from Western Europe are particularly likely to adopt these circular migratory patterns.

At the time of writing, in the wake of the January 2007 parliamentary elections in Serbia, migration policy can be anticipated to be reshaped slightly by the pro-EU leanings of the new government. The exception to this will remain the policy about internally displaced persons from Kosovo residing in Serbia (and to a lesser extent Montenegro). The position of the Serbian government has been to date that return is the only sustainable option for displaced Serbs from Kosovo; the policy of all parties toward the future status of Kosovo must take into account the potential for further displacement and the right of return of those in displacement.

## **Economic Migrants from Serbia (including Kosovo) and Montenegro**

### **The “Brain drain” Phenomenon and the Serbian Diaspora**

In this text, we will use the term ‘Serbian-Montenegrin diaspora’ despite controversies over this concept. This term must be understood to encompass Serbs, Montenegrins and Yugoslavs of Serbian and Montenegrin origin who are separated from their ‘mother’ states but who preserve and nurture their respective national cultures and continue to participate, or take interest, in either or all of social,

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<sup>1</sup> Serbia 2006 Progress Report, (COM(2006) 649 final), Brussels, 8.11. 2006, SEC (2006) 1389.

<sup>2</sup> Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244) 2006 Progress Report, (COM(2006) 649 final), Brussels, 8.11. 2006, SEC (2006) 1386.

<sup>3</sup> Montenegro 2006 Progress Report, (COM(2006) 649 final), Brussels, 8.11. 2006, SEC (2006) 1388.

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economic or political networks in Serbia and/or Montenegro<sup>4</sup>.

Although there is no specific data on the number of members of the Albanian diaspora from the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, the issue is increasingly recognized by experts in Kosovo. In a recent public debate, the following questions were raised: "Is Kosovo doing enough to benefit from the knowledge and experience of its people living abroad? Is it losing the very people who have the most capacities? Does the Kosovo government have a plan for "brain gain"? And what problems do people encounter who return?". Panellists commented that the labour market in Kosovo is not sufficiently open and the government was criticized for not motivating people to return to Kosovo<sup>5</sup>.

Among the millions of citizens of Serbia and Montenegro who now live in the USA and Western Europe, there are many successful businessmen who are ready to invest a part of their capital in small and middle-sized enterprises in their homelands. Their readiness has been confirmed by numerous studies. Recent estimates put the Serbian and Montenegrin diaspora at over 3.5 million persons. If only one percent of them were to participate in the development of their countries of origin, it would make a significant contribution. However, unlike other countries Serbia and Montenegro have faced a series of major internal and external problems in the past years that have hindered investment.

Similarly, after the year 2000, immigration abroad including the "brain drain" has continued. For example, in the fiscal year of 2003-2004 only, the USA issued 3,330 immigration visas to citizens of Serbia and Montenegro. Among them were 205 experts of technical and similar sciences and 75 managers and other executives. It is estimated that at least 12% of the migrants from Serbia and Montenegro, who emigrate, hold a university degree. The number of educated and qualified persons from Serbia and Montenegro in Western countries is substantial. Experts from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Jean-Christophe Dumont and Georges Lemaitre (2005), conducted an analysis of the overall number of foreigners and those with university education in the countries of OECD; according to them, 127,000 people with university education from Serbia and Montenegro were living in OECD countries. It is also estimated that among migrants from Serbia and Montenegro possessing at least high school education, 35% are employed in jobs which require lesser qualifications, indicating that over one third of migrants are underemployed<sup>6</sup>.

The reasons for emigration of citizens of Serbia and Montenegro can be roughly divided into three groups: economic problems including the decline in per capita income and unemployment, political concerns including instability and corruption and ethnic tensions which have been briefly addressed in above sections. Although such a categorization simplifies analysis, in practice these three 'push' factors for emigration are deeply intertwined<sup>7</sup>.

The number of workers who have travelled overseas for temporary work has also increased. The transition of Western countries to knowledge-based economies has resulted in an acute need for specialists, especially IT experts. The USA, which receives about 70,000 immigrants a year, is the main destination for IT experts.<sup>8</sup> The IT sector is responsible for one-third of the overall rise in productivity and certain fields have greatly benefited from engaging experts in general, particularly those who have come to the country with the H-1B visa. In the fiscal year 2004-2005, the USA received 788 persons born in Serbia and Montenegro in the category of »nonimmigrants admitted as temporary workers«. Among them there were 283 workers with specialty occupations (workers with specialty occupations, H-1B and H-1B1 visa).

A recent analysis of immigrants in Germany constructed a profile of the Serbian-Montenegrin diaspora.

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<sup>4</sup> For the syntagm of the Serbian and Montenegrin diaspora, the grassroots can be found in the Serbian-Montenegrin Literary and Charity Society, founded in San Francisco on April 27, 1880. The aim of the society was "mutual help in need and in sickness, teaching and spreading education not only among our members but among other Slavic people living in this place" (Pero Slijep\_evi\_, Serbs in America, Printed by "Ujedinjenje", Geneva 1917, page 12).

<sup>5</sup> Panel discussion, Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, Pristina, 08.09.2006., <http://www.birn.eu.com/en/1/50/1383/>

<sup>6</sup> Net migration in Western ECA 1989-2003.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Baldwin-Edwards, "Sustainable development and emigration: the contemporary Balkans and the European Union", *South-East Europe Review*, No. 1, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

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“Today, about 500 000 immigrants with Serbian citizenship live in Germany. The present immigration balance of Serbians in Germany is negative. In other words, more Serbians are leaving the country than entering it. The politically forced return of refugees after the Kosovo conflict probably lies behind this sinking trend in the migration numbers. Together with the naturalised migrants, it is estimated that about 700 000 migrants of Serbian origin live in Germany ...However, the percentage of immigrants from Serbia and Montenegro who are entering Germany for educational purposes is gradually increasing. In 2001 it was 4%; in 2004, a solid 5%. It is to be expected that the importance of student migration from the border states of the EU is being supported within the framework of the European educational policy, while the other forms of migration (familial related and political) are tapering off.”<sup>9</sup>

Although a large number of citizens of Serbia live abroad, Serbian authorities have given this demographic insufficient attention. This was slightly rectified by the formation of the Ministry of Diaspora in 2004 within the Government of the Republic of Serbia in March 2004. Although the Ministry has done a great deal on re-establishing contacts with the diaspora in the past three years, distrust between state institutions and the diaspora community remains strong.

According to the current Minister for Diaspora, Vojislav Vuk\_evi\_,

“The diaspora’s distrust of the state originated in the 1990s. This distrust was strengthened by awareness of bureaucratic problems and corruption in Serbia. Even so, Branko Tupanjac, an American citizen of Serbian origin wanted to build a hospital, and the city asked for a lot of money for the city building site and permissions. Interest is also high in Serbian spas and houses intended for the elderly. The Ministry of Diaspora invited all local governments in Serbia to submit information to create an economic profile of Serbia and 80 municipalities responded to the invitation. The produced CD has been distributed in America and will be distributed through the Serbian Unity Congress as well. The idea of the Ministry is that all Serbian associations in diaspora should be included in the Serbian Unity Congress.”<sup>10</sup>

The biggest success of the Ministry so far is that 8,000 young people have been released from criminal responsibility through the Law on Amnesty. Although formally it cannot propose laws, the Ministry of Diaspora has contributed to the adoption of the new Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Serbia, and it has been strongly lobbying for the Serbian diaspora to have the right to vote by mail.

## Remittances in Serbia (including Kosovo) and Montenegro<sup>11</sup>

With remittances, there is always a discrepancy between how individual choose to spend them and the economically optimal use of them. In other words, governments generally struggle to encourage migrants to invest their savings. Remittances have the distinct advantage of not producing reciprocal obligations on the receiving state (compared to foreign aid, for example). Remittance receivers enjoy better financed education, and indirectly contribute the development of better public infrastructure. These two aspects can generate a virtuous economic circle, spawning increased foreign investment and better productivity. On the other hand, remittances can also finance non-productive expenditure, increase unemployment among remittance receivers, increase inequality in the emigration country, lead to depreciation of the local currency and Dutch disease.

According to estimates by the National Bank of Serbia, \$3 or 4 billion per year enter Serbia as private remittances.<sup>12</sup> This remittance flow to Serbia is not recorded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), however, and the Serbian central bank only documents running public and private transfers in aggregate

<sup>9</sup> Tatjana Baraulina et al. *Egyptian, Afgan and Serbian diaspora communities in Germany: How do they contribute to their country of origin?* Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWI), 2007, pg 15, 19.

<sup>10</sup> Taken from the interview with the Minister for Diaspora, PhD Mr Vojislav Vuk\_evi\_, taken by Group 484 representative, December 20, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> The available data are joint data for Serbia and Montenegro

<sup>12</sup> Report on the work of the Ministry for Diaspora of the Republic of Serbia, February 2006, page 2, [www.mzd.org.yu](http://www.mzd.org.yu)

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without distinguishing these according to the source country.<sup>13</sup> According to unpublished statistics of the German Federal Bank, 240 million Euros were transferred from Germany to Serbia in 2004. Here, too however, only official transfers of unnaturalised Serbians living in Germany were recorded.<sup>14</sup>

Problems in remittance sending have been documented by German researchers.

“Serbia has a well-developed banking system, yet the Serbian population in Germany does not trust this system because the Serbian government nationalised their currency accounts in the 1990s in order to finance the war. Furthermore, the fraudulent pyramid systems as well as hyper inflation have resulted in further uncertainty. Even though the Serbian finance market is now more stable ..., it is estimated that approximately one-third of the remittances flow through informal channels.... According to our interview partners, Serbians transfer on average 5000 euros per year, the majority of which goes into construction or renovation of houses or purchase of real estate....The big problem is that the money which comes from abroad in this way is not directed to production but to expenditure. In diaspora, there is a considerable distrust in certain institutions at both local and state level.... The distrust in the state institutions is widely spread among the Serbian diaspora in Germany. The most considerable obstacles for direct investment into Serbia have been seen in the still insecure political and legal frameworks, along with poorly functioning litigation.”<sup>15</sup>

The necessity of better and more systematic monitoring of remittances to Serbia is also illustrated by the following data. It is estimated that remittances to Serbia are between 2.4 billion USD, or 12.0 per cent of the GDP in 2004.<sup>16</sup> Similar data can also be found in another World Bank research which estimates that remittances comprise 5 – 10 % of the GDP of Serbia.

“In Kosovo, the biggest source is salaries from regular employment with about half of total income (51%). Another 6 % are earned from temporary work. The second biggest source is remittances in cash from household members abroad (10%) with additional 3 % from others abroad.”<sup>17</sup>

## Immigration to Serbia

The disintegration of the former Yugoslavia produced many statistical migrants (foreign born residents) who may not actually have physically moved, but are defined as migrants by the UN practice. According to data of the UN Population Agency, the number of persons born abroad and were living in Serbia and Montenegro in 2005 was 512,336, which is 4.9% of the total population (this data applies to the former State Union of Serbia and Montenegro). The majority of persons born abroad, but living in Serbia, are refugees who have been addressed in previous sections. However, with the stabilisation of circumstances in the Western Balkans, the growth rate of migrants in Serbia and Montenegro has been negative since 2000.

Illegal migration in Serbia is still a cause for concern, although some progress has been achieved. The total number of illegal entries in 2005 was 1,076, an increase of 3% compared with the previous year.<sup>18</sup> The number of minors and women who have entered the country illegally has considerably increased. The potential link with human trafficking is a particular cause for concern.

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<sup>13</sup> Tatjana Baraulina et al. *Egyptian, Afghan and Serbian diaspora communities in Germany: How do they contribute to their country of origin?* Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWI), 2007, pg.20

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, pg. 20

<sup>15</sup> Ibid pg 23

<sup>16</sup> World Bank Working Paper No. 80, *The Germany – Serbia Remittance Corridor. Challenges of Establishing a Formal Money Transfer System*, by Jose De Luna Martinez, Isaku Endo and Corrado Barberis, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2006, p.

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<sup>17</sup> Private income in Kosovo 2003-2005, The Statistical Office of Kosovo (SOK),pg 3

<sup>18</sup> Serbia 2006 Progress Report, (COM(2006) 649 final), Brussels, 8.11. 2006, SEC (2006) 1389.

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Of legal and illegal migrants, during the first 10 months of 2006, 7,601 migrants faced sanctions for immigration violations; these were mostly towards nationals of Albania – 1,539, then Bulgaria – 1,277, Romania - 964, Turkey - 630, and Bosnia and Herzegovina - 468.<sup>19</sup>

In accordance with existing criminal legislation, during 2005 some 37 criminal charges were filed against 87 perpetrators of the criminal act of trafficking of 219 migrants, the majority of them were nationals of Albania. 19 charges were also filed for illegal border crossing. 2,320 visa claims submitted by Chinese nationals were rejected, 1,693 claims of Romanian nationals and 149 of Moldavian nationals. Upon tightening border controls, entry to Serbia was denied to 24,535 aliens, and 1,727 false identification documents were discovered.<sup>20</sup>

Montenegrin border crossings are targeted almost daily by illegal migrants, with statistics indicating an increase each year. During the first six months of 2006, 160 persons tried to illegally cross the Montenegrin border, out of which: 126 are Albanian nationals, 19 are Serbian nationals (Kosovo) and 15 are nationals of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The illegal crossing of the state border is a violation and is penalised by the pecuniary sentence or maximum 30 days imprisonment sentence.<sup>21</sup> Only three years ago, 216 persons without documents were detained, and in 2004 the number of illegal entries in Montenegro soared to 363 persons. The majority of the illegal migrants have been trying to reach some other “promised” country, usually in the European Union, via Montenegro.

Concerning aliens illegally residing in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, the Ministry of Interior cites the following data. During 2004, 743,090 aliens registered their residence in Serbia, and during 2005, the number increased to 763,474 aliens, and by December 20, 2006, the number was 768,739 aliens. This number does not include aliens transiting the Republic of Serbia. Among those who have registered their residence, the majority are Austrian nationals – 162,691, Croatians – 126,962, nationals of Bosnia and Herzegovina – 124,289, Slovenians – 123,626, Bulgarians – 88,760, and Romanians – 43,629.

According to the provision of Article 31 of the Law on Movement and Stay of Aliens ("Official Gazette of SFRY", No. 56/80, 53/85, 30/89, 26/90 and 53/91, "Official Gazette of SRY", No. 24/94, 28/96 and 68/2002 and "Official Gazette of RS", No. 101/2005 and other laws) an alien can be granted a temporary residence for the duration of three months, or for up to seven days to transit through the territory of Serbia. Since temporary residence can be extended, the Ministry of Interior has issued permission granting temporary residence for multiple years to 16,556 persons. Out of that number, 4,552 are Chinese nationals, 3,632 are Romanian nationals, 1,243 are Macedonian nationals, 591 are nationals of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 551 are Russian nationals.

The most common reasons for granting temporary residence are *marriage* - 5733 aliens, out of which 2,022 are Romanian nationals (Romanian women are most prevalent), 618 are Macedonians, 334 are from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 310 are Ukrainians; *employment* – 5,664 aliens, 2,658 are Chinese nationals (Belgrade, Pan\_evo), 922 are Romanians, 239 are Macedonians; and *family reunion* – 2,687 aliens, out of which 1,228 are Chinese nationals, 221 are Romanian nationals, 155 are Croatian nationals. According to Article 39 of the Law, permanent residence status can be granted to an alien whose family member (spouse, child, parent) is a SFRY national or an alien with permanent residence in SFRY, who is of Yugoslav origin, or who has invested finances in SFRY.

According to this provision, permanent residence status, which automatically supercedes temporary residence, was granted predominantly based on marriage. Out of 4,781 aliens granted permanent residence, over 90% were granted the status on the grounds of marriage: 856 Romanian nationals, 379 Polish nationals, 355 Hungarians, 244 Bulgarians, 239 Ukrainians and only 3 Chinese nationals. In 2005, 8,434 sanctions were issued for immigration violations, mostly to Bulgarian nationals - 1674, Romanian nationals - 1552, Albanians - 821, Turks - 790, and Macedonians – 455.

<sup>19</sup> From the interview with Nenad Banovi\_, Border Police Administration of the Ministry of Interior of Serbia, Head of the Unit for Status Issues and Residence of Aliens Control, December 20, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Marija Jovi\_evi\_, "Searching for better life, illegal migrants go through Montenegro as well", *Pobjeda*, 29/10/2006

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## Multiculturalism and education

The fact that in the nineties Serbia was the country which hosted most refugees in Europe and that newcomers have fundamentally changed the structure of towns in any way, including the cultural way; the fact that mainly Serbs came to Serbia as refugees thus strengthening the potential for nationalistic perceptions and interpretations of social events; historical facts that migration has made the picture of the Balkans and Serbia the way it is now. The fact, that no Chinese nationals have Serbian citizenship shows how important is education and promotion of diversities.

By placing migration in the context of interculturalism, we put this issue in much broader perspective and observe it as one of the elements in profiling community which integrates the people of different ethnicities and lifestyles.

Multicultural society is a concept frequently discussed in politics, the social sciences and everyday communication. There are various interpretations and definitions of a multicultural society. Through our work with the youth in the Group 484 project *We and "The Others"*, a definition was created for easier understanding of the concept of a multicultural society – a society where different ethnic, domicile and migrant communities live together.

In this part, we will focus our attention on ethnic, refugee/IDP and religious communities, regardless of the fact that in a society there are other minority groups differing according to their social position, sexual orientation, lifestyle or political beliefs. Apart from the issue of ethnic minorities, two topical issues in the modern world are the issue of migrants' and women's status in the society and the acceptance of homosexuality.

Regardless of the influence of national ideologies, many European countries have for centuries had mixed population, whether it is regarding differences in religion (Holland), language (Belgium), or ethnicity (Basques in Spain and France, Roma in many countries). The majority of European countries also have large communities of immigrants, very often as a result of decolonisation or economic migration. In the region of Southeast Europe, multiethnic communities have been present ever since ancient times, in the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires until today, making the region of the Balkans an endlessly colourful mosaic of intertwining cultures. During the wars in the nineties, migration made the social and cultural picture of the Balkans even more colourful.

Today, we are accustomed to life in multiethnic society. However, different languages, cultures, the lack of citizenship values and behaviours very often results in problems and misunderstandings, instead of serving as a means to mutual enrichment.

How familiar are we with the nature of multiethnic and multicultural societies and to what extent are we prepared for intercultural exchange?

As a reminder, in the course of their education youth learn about "others" most often through history concentrated on 'plain' historical data emphasising political and military events. Naturally, these are important aspects of history, but it is often a history of society's elite. In such an orientation toward history, ordinary people are almost completely forgotten, including how their lives looked like in certain moments in history.

Examining history through the history of everyday life has proven to be the most appropriate method to frame research on multicultural societies and the potential capacity for collaborative life in such societies:

The history of everyday life offers various possibilities for research. Even large topics can be presented through the experience of ordinary people.

If we want to understand life in the Ottoman or Habsburg Empire, given the fact that we still carry in ourselves the heritage of both empires, we can ask some of the following questions: What did life look like in these empires? What were the rights and obligations of the people then? Did the people from different communities have different social status? What were their religious rights?

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Or, if we take, for example, the Second World War – we are familiar with the data of all military operations, number of divisions, the names of the liberation movements leaders, but little is known about the life of ordinary people – what was the world like from the perspective of a child whose father was in the war; how did the child live then, what was the role of his or her mother, how did the children and youth who had come in refugee lines to the local community live, and what about war orphans, what were the children's games like, what did he/she eat and wear, who were his/her friends, and generally how the child experienced the war.

Such an approach – researching and understanding history from the perspective of an individual - makes history more relevant, and shows what life at a certain moment in history meant for ordinary people, and not only for rulers, statesmen and soldiers, and that history is not only about wars, statesmen and peace agreements. By entering the lives of ordinary people, we have an opportunity to show the character of certain state and system, as well as how different ethnic and religious, refugee and other minority communities lived in certain regions.

By introducing everyday life topics, such as childhood, entertainment, customs, women's status, etc., the 'abstract' history is made relevant with concrete content.

By answering the question about everyday life in a certain moment in history, it is easy to make out similarities and differences between the past and present, not only in regard to certain historical events but also in certain regions.

The main principles in working on the topics related to a multiethnic and multiconfessional society are as follows.

- 1) Equal representation of communities
- 2) Multiperspectiveness
- 3) Research based on sources
- 4) Analytical and critical thinking

The purpose of these possible topics for researching a multicultural society is:

- To add topics from the history of everyday life to common history topics, taking care that the selection of topics is relevant and interesting for younger learners (the history of childhood, school, games, customs, etc.);
- To fill the somewhat abstract topics (multiculturalism, nation, religion, migration, history, etc.) with concrete content;
- To understand changes through time – that many concepts which are nowadays taken for granted (equality, the right to education, general human rights, rights of people in refuge and displacement, the right to freedom of choice, freedom of religion, gender equality, etc.) have gone, and still are going through, historical development;
- To show to the youth the similarities and differences that were, and partially are still, present in everyday life in the same and different geographical regions;
- To enable the youth to discuss, analyse, and understand different types of sources and material (archive material, photographs, paintings, the things people had taken with them from their homes to refuge and displacement, books, films, interviews, etc.);
- To familiarise the youth with their own everyday life history, so that they could understand that history is primarily related to people and their ordinary lives;
- To teach the youth to work with interdisciplinary methods, to use the experiences from other sciences, and to use books;
- To free the youth from the stereotypes related to 'others', in the event they have such stereotypes.